



**ALABAMA COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE SYSTEM**

**Department of Postsecondary Education  
Joan Davis, Interim Chancellor**

ACCS Contact

Director of Communications  
Martha Simmons  
T 334.353.5892  
C 334.850.0882  
F 334.353.5523  
[dpecom@dpe.edu](mailto:dpecom@dpe.edu)  
[www.accs.cc](http://www.accs.cc)

Workforce Development Contact

Marketing & Communications Manager  
Linda Bryan  
T 334-353-1409  
[lbryan@dpe.edu](mailto:lbryan@dpe.edu)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Friday, June 19, 2009

## **Ready to Work program makes positive impact on wire screen manufacturer's bottom line**

**Tuscaloosa, Ala.** – Ask any company the secret to its success and you'll probably hear "our workers." Phifer, Inc., a Tuscaloosa-based metal and synthetic wire screen manufacturer, partners with nearby Shelton State Community College in a program that helps ensure the company will have access to the most qualified, committed employees.

"We sat down with Shelton State and told them what we wanted as an employer," said Russell DuBose, Phifer's human resource employment manager. The result was an applicant pre-screening and selection process and subsequent referral to the Ready to Work training program.

Initial screening of applicants based on company-specific criteria is handled by the Tuscaloosa Career Center. From this pool, the company selects a smaller group of individuals inviting them to participate in the Ready to Work program offered by Shelton State. Although not guaranteed a job, these individuals know they have a better than average shot at getting hired when the company has openings.

The free, five-week Ready to Work program, funded by the Alabama Community College System and approved by the State Workforce Planning Council, provides entry-level skills to adults with limited education and employment experience. Attendance and punctuality are strictly monitored and the participants are assessed in soft skills, such as workplace behavior and problem solving. Successful completers also earn a WorkKeys credential and an Alabama Certified Worker Certificate.

This pre-employment screening and invitation process pays big dividends for the company, notes DuBose, adding that individuals who have completed the Ready to Work program "make a better applicant." In the two years since it began utilizing this hiring process, DuBose said, the company has enjoyed a 90 percent retention rate and very low turnover – both of which help with the bottom line.

**education works.**

According to DuBose, all of the jobs at Phifer, have been profiled and require a WorkKeys credential. The added benefit of assessing and documenting an individual's interpersonal skills is a bonus. "Any way to measure workplace behavior," DuBose said, "is a plus for the company. Ninety-two percent of the employees fail due to workplace behavior and only 8 percent because of skills."

George Pratt, Shelton State's assistant director of workforce development, agrees with DuBose's assessment. Those who have completed the Ready to Work program are "better hires because they have documented, metric-measured abilities; they have committed to the program; and they have had a chance to interface with the potential employer so the learning curve of how the industry functions is reduced."

Pratt said Phifer is pleased with this screening and referral process and plans to use it almost exclusively to identify new hires.

"Phifer and Shelton State's partnership is an excellent example of a system approach to workforce development," said Dr. Matthew Hughes, who serves as the director for both the Governor's Office of Workforce Development and the Workforce Development Division of the Department of Postsecondary Education. "I hope other industries will take advantage of the partnering opportunities offered in our system."

The Office of Workforce Development was created by Governor Bob Riley for the purpose of providing Alabama with a fully integrated, efficient and effective workforce development system that is responsive to current and future needs of job-seekers and employers.

###